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SUBJECT: CONAKRY PROTESTS OVER MISSING BODIES

REF: CONAKRY 00615

¶1. (U) Summary. Today marks 51 years since Guinea declared independence from France. It also marks the fourth day since nearly 200 Guineans lost their lives during violent confrontations with the military. Their bodies have yet to be recovered by families. The CNDD's commemoration of Independence Day and its plan to release 58 bodies to Conakry's Faisal mosque backfired, and protesters trickled into the streets of Conakry. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) When CNDD President Moussa Dadis Camara went to lay the ceremonial wreath at the Martyr's Monument, a small crowd gathered to yell, "Dadis is useless! Zero! Zero!" The event was peaceful, and the protestors and security forces alike remained orderly. Dadis left the area after a brief pause at the site.

¶3. (U) Less than two hours later, the situation became visibly tenser when the CNDD opened the Grand Mosque to the public for the collection of 58 of their dead (reftel). According to witnesses, several thousand Guineans surrounded the mosque compound to collect the bodies and demand the return of the other missing dead, estimated at over 150.

¶4. (U) The situation turned violent when the crowds noticed that none of the bodies on display had bullet wounds, indicating that the CNDD chose only those who were killed by other means. People were also disappointed with not finding the bodies of their loved ones. Witnesses say that at least 20 bodies were decomposed so dramatically that their relatives could not identify them. When Koutoubu Sano, the CNDD Minister for Religious Affairs, gave his condolences, the crowd reportedly physically attacked him. After only a few seconds, Imams from the mosque were able to disperse the crowd peacefully. The police then sprayed tear gas inside the mosque to clear the area. Sano was not seriously injured.

¶5. (U) Several witnesses at the event report that the protest turned more violent after the protestors left the mosque. Apparently, several of the demonstrators attacked the Imams who they said were "just covering for the CNDD." The security forces then beat back the attackers back with nightsticks and warning shots fired into the air. Though several people were injured, there are no deaths reported from the event as of yet.

¶6. (U) Embassy continues to receive reports of growing demonstrations in the Bellvue and Madina market area, apparently prompted by the incident at the mosque. Many of

the victims' families are reportedly marching toward Camp Alpha Yaya to demand the bodies back from the CNDD. Although the Forces Vives had planned another demonstration for 1500 this afternoon, the situation at the mosque, coupled with the fact that all text messages have been disabled since this morning, reportedly hindered the organization of the rally.

BROKENSHIRE